

VetChange

Web Based Treatment Reduces Risky Alcohol Use
and PTSD Symptoms in OEF/OIF Veterans*

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*Funded by NIAAA and
National Center for PTSD

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Post-deployment problems OEF/OIF Veterans

- Alcohol misuse
- High rates of PTSD
- Co-morbid drinking and PTSD
- Not reaching all Veterans who need care with traditional interventions

Internet Interventions

A Promising Approach

- Address primary barriers to care
- Growing evidence of effectiveness for problem drinking and PTSD
- Potential for reaching large number of returning Veterans

Developing VetChange

- Fully automated Web intervention
- Derived from evidence-based care
- Tailored to returning Veterans
- Integrated approach

Key Questions

Will they come?

Will they stay?

Will they improve?

The screenshot shows the VetChange.org website in a Mozilla Firefox browser window. The website has a dark blue header with the logo 'VetChange.org' and the tagline 'Helping veterans help themselves'. A 'Local Resources' link is in the top right. Below the header is a 'PARTICIPANT LOGIN' section with a text input field and a 'LOGIN' button. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'Welcome to VetChange' and contains text about the website's purpose for OIF and OEF veterans, a paragraph about the research study, and a 'Privacy' link. The right column is titled 'Let's Get Started' and contains a paragraph about the registration process, followed by three dropdown menus for age, military service, and gender, and a 'Continue' button. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with links: 'About the Program', 'About Us', 'Study Payment', and 'Eligibility'.

Home page - Mozilla Firefox

Home page

VetChange.org
Helping veterans help themselves

Local Resources

PARTICIPANT LOGIN LOGIN

Welcome to VetChange

This is a website for OIF and OEF veterans who are concerned about their drinking.

If you're a returning veteran who is having problems related to drinking, you're not alone. Many returning veterans have increased their drinking since returning from deployment and are wondering if it's time to make some changes.

If you'd like to cut down or stop drinking by using a self-management, confidential program on the Web, we may have a solution for you.

We're conducting a research study to figure out whether our web program, VetChange, will help returning veterans change their drinking on their own. If you participate in the program, you will be compensated with an online gift card each time you complete one of several evaluation surveys in the program.

Privacy

Private and Confidential

Your participation and all your responses will be kept confidential. Nothing you tell us will be shared with your healthcare providers, including VA providers, or with the military. We only ask for your email address. More information about this is in the Web program.

Let's Get Started

If you're interested, let's start by having you answer a few questions about your age, service, and drinking and then we'll give you some information about whether you're eligible to be a part of the study and use the website.

Are you between the ages of the 18 and 65?

Did you serve in Operation Iraq Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom?

Are you Male or Female?
Male

Continue

About the Program About Us Study Payment Eligibility

Research studies over the past 30 years show that people can often reduce risky drinking on their own, and sometimes with help from written materials that describe some ways of doing this. VetChange is a self-management program on the Web that can help you decide if you want to change your drinking (to cut down or stop) and assist you in making these changes if you're ready to do so. It may also help you reduce combat-related stress which may be affecting your drinking. This research is designed to find out how well VetChange helps people meet these goals.

VetChange RANDOMIZED CLINICAL TRIAL

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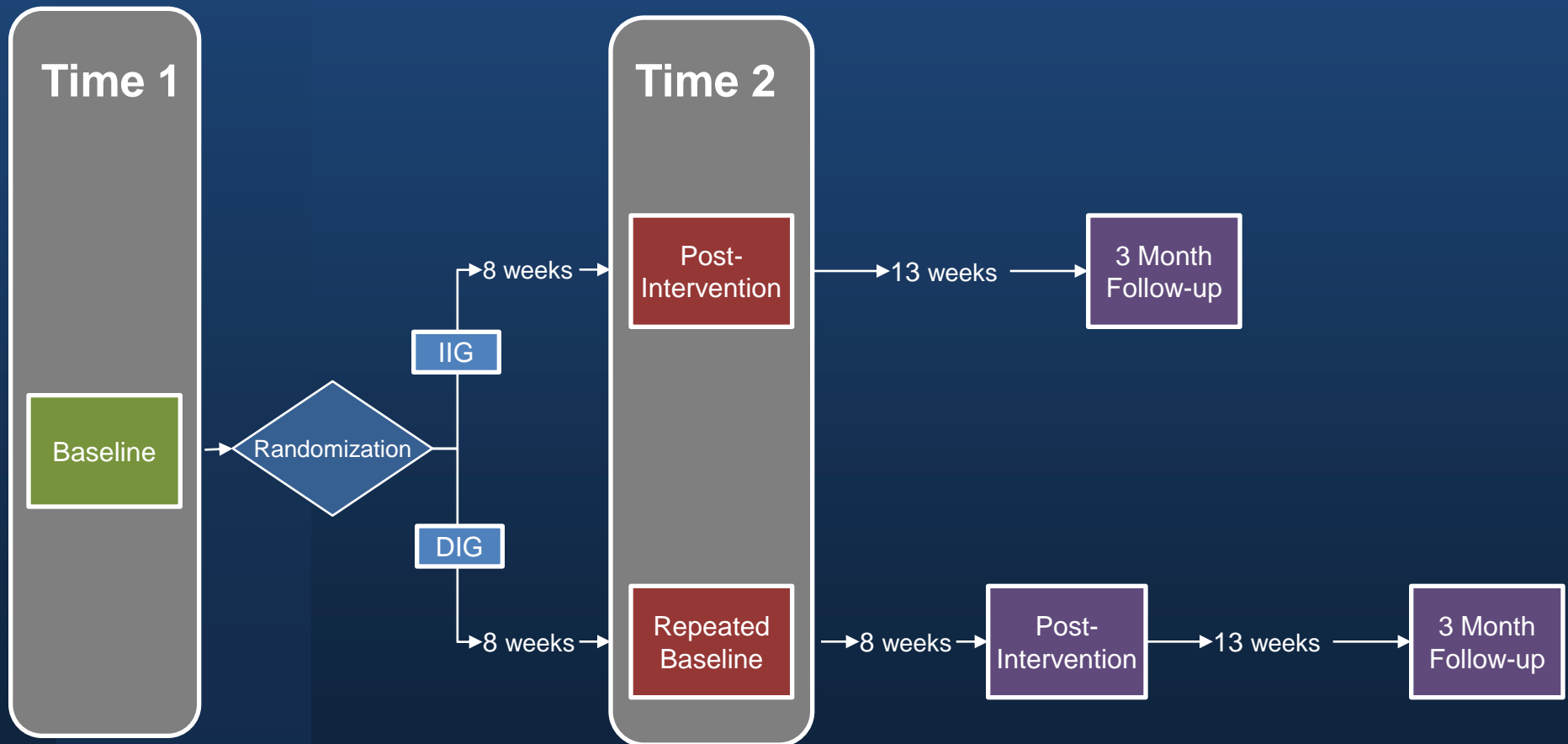
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Study Design

- Two Groups
 - Initial Intervention Group (IIG)
 - Delayed Intervention Group (DIG)
- 2:1 Randomization favoring IIG
- Participants balanced on gender

Assessment Timeline



Target Population

- Few restrictions on study entry
- OEF/OIF male and female veterans
- Ages 18–65
- Problem Drinkers or mild dependence
 - AUDIT scores 8–25 (M), 5–25 (W)
 - Drinking above NIAAA guidelines past 30 days
- Willing to provide email address

Assessment Measures

- Demographic/military questions
- AUDIT (Alcohol problem severity)
- QDS (Quantity/Frequency Drinking)*
- SIP (Alcohol related problems)*
- DRRI (combat exposure)
- PCL-5 (PTSD Symptom Checklist)*

VetChange INTERVENTION

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About Us Study Payment Eligibility

Goals of Intervention

- Eight modules
 - Enhance motivation to change
 - Improve coping skills to manage broad range of high risk drinking situations
 - Coping skills training to manage moods, stress, PTSD symptoms (anger/sleep)
 - Build social support
- Flexible in addressing drinking goals

VetChange RESULTS

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About Us

Study Payment

Eligibility

Will they Come?

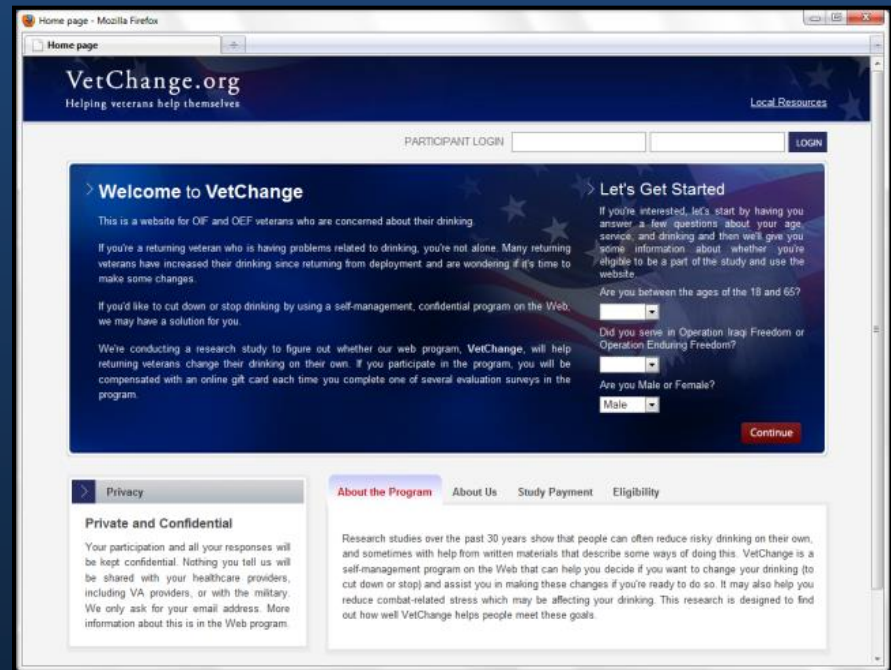
Facebook
Advertising

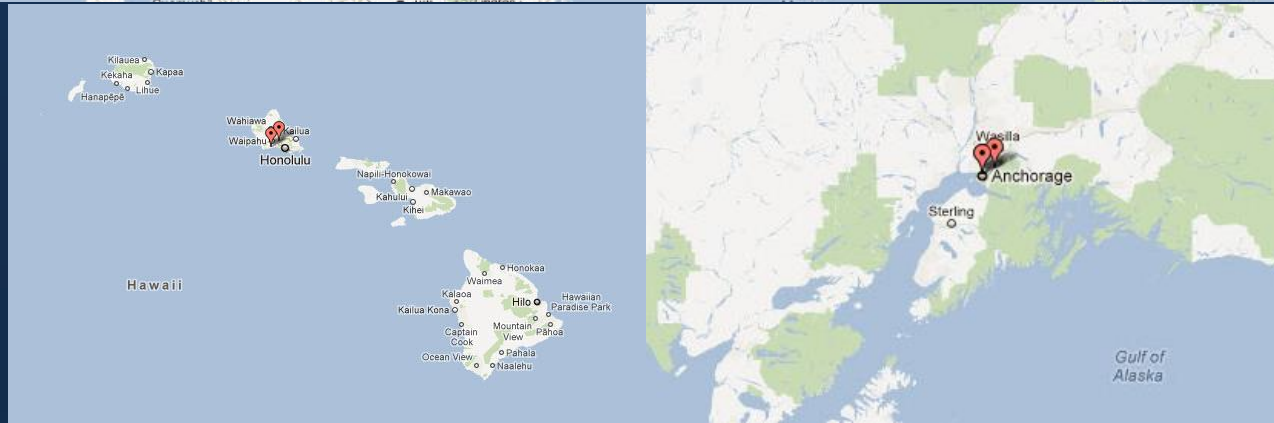
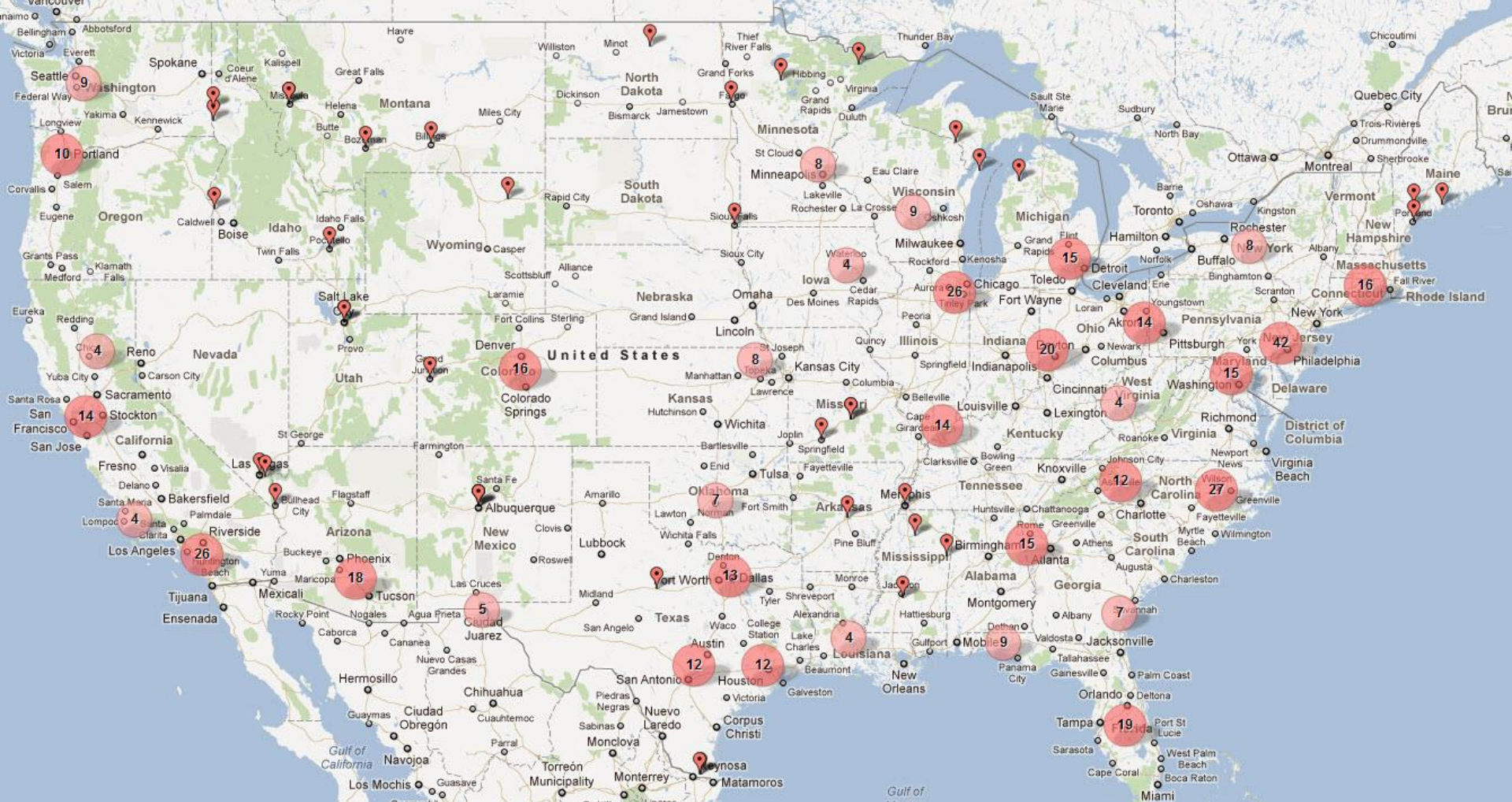


46 days of
recruiting



600 randomized
participants

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Participant Characteristics

600 participants

- 404 IIG, 196 in DIG

Demographics

- Average age: 32.0 (7.7)
- 86.3% male; 13.7% female
- 79.3% Caucasian; 9.7% Latino; 4.3 % African-American

Deployment

- 181 Afghanistan, 501 Iraq
- Average number of tours: 2.3 (1.9)
- Average number of months deployed: 19.3 (14.8)
- 60% Army, 20% Marines

Baseline Assessment Groups Combined

	Mean	SD
Measure		
AUDIT	17.7	4.7
Average Drinks per Drinking Day (DDD)	7.1	3.7
Average Drinks per Week (AWD)	27.5	18.3
Percent Heavy Drinking Days (HDD)	34.2	27.7
SIP (Alcohol-related problems)	17.4	8.1
DRRI Combat Exposure Scale (CES)	8.0	4.2
PCL-5	40.8	19.3

Treatment Within Past Three Months

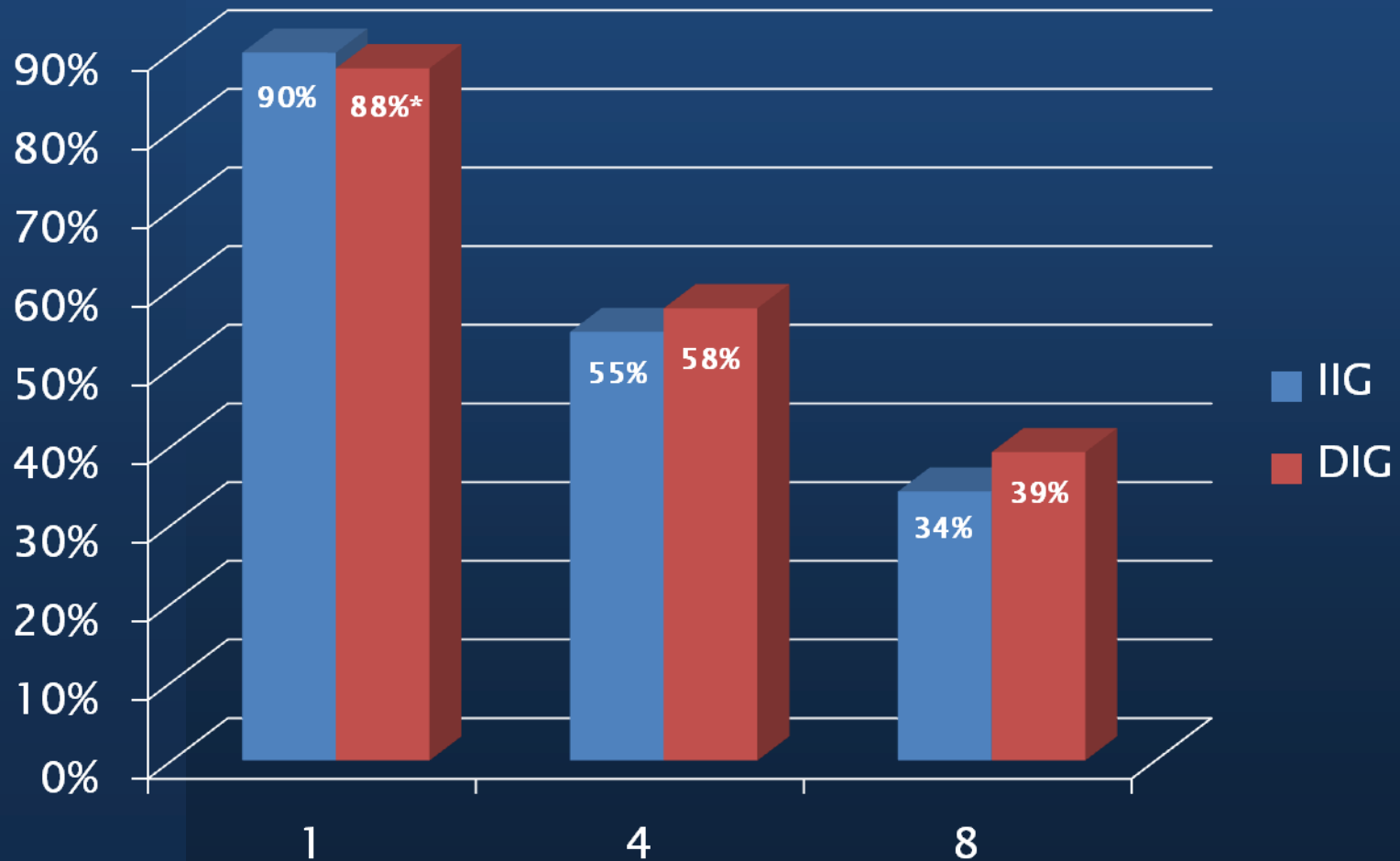
Treatment	%
ANY*	61.8
TYPE OF TREATMENT	
Mental Health (MH) Only	60.2
MH and Alcohol/Drug	33.1
Alcohol or Drug Only	6.7

***78.2% of Veterans in treatment report this was for PTSD**

VetChange Results

WILL THEY STAY?

Module Completion Rates



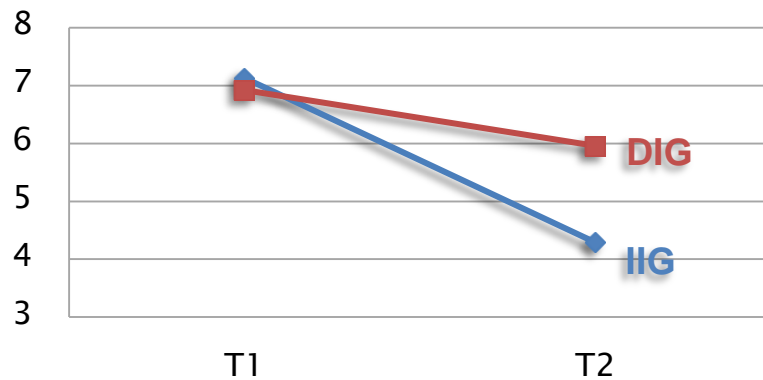
*who completed second baseline

VetChange Results

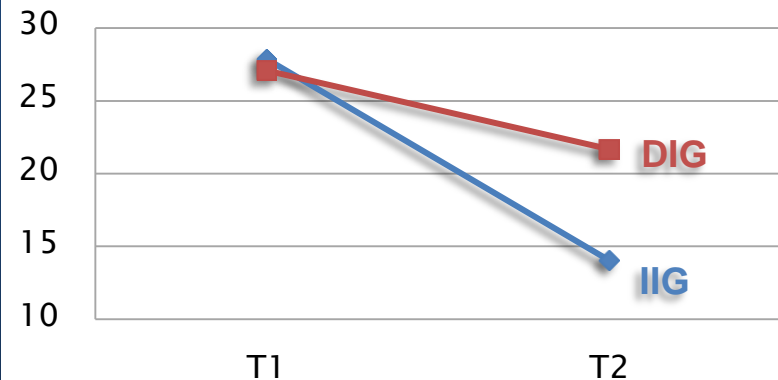
WILL THEY IMPROVE?

Drinking Outcomes

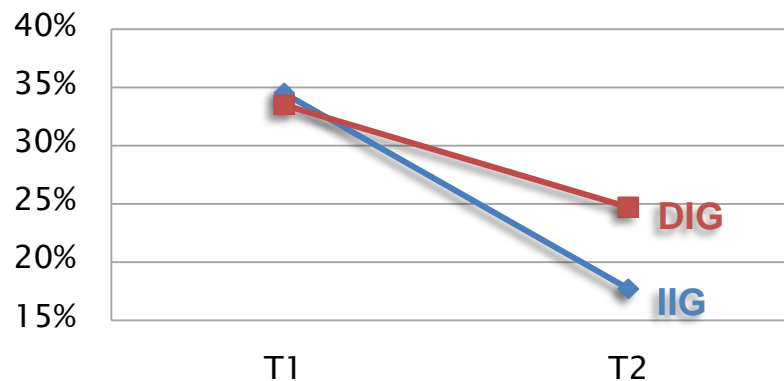
Average Drinks per Drinking Day*



Average Drinks per Week*

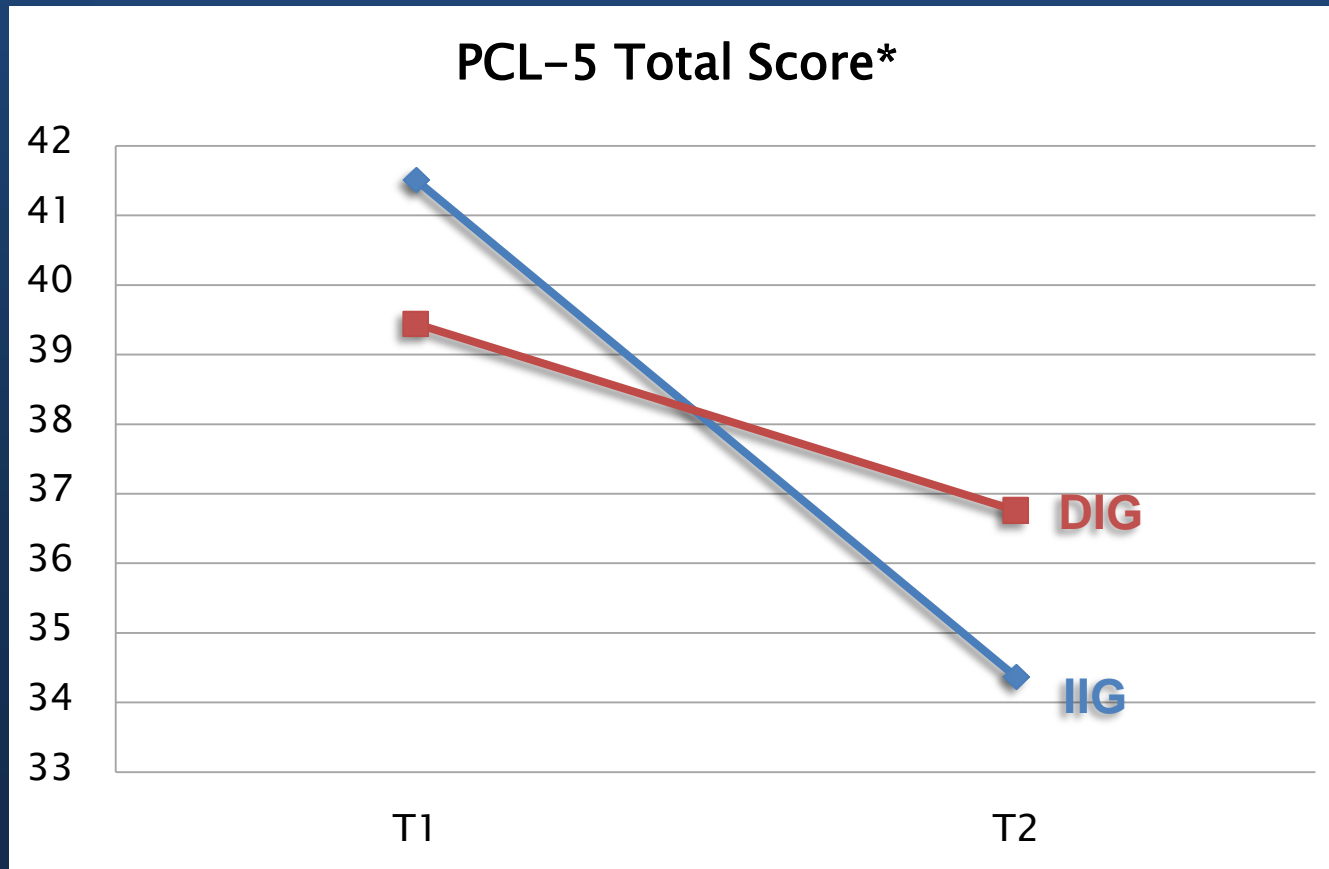


Percent Heavy Drinking Days*



* $p < .001$

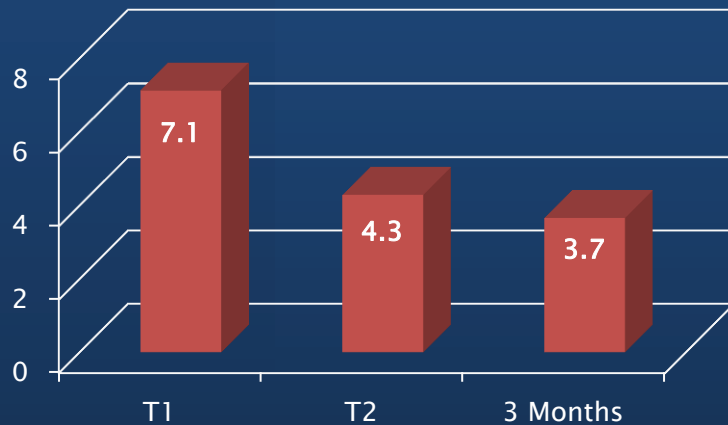
PTSD Symptom Change



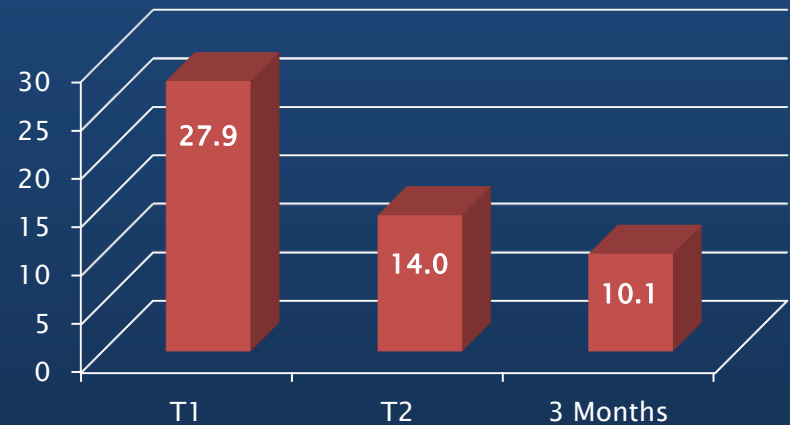
* $p < .001$

IIG with 3 Month Follow Up

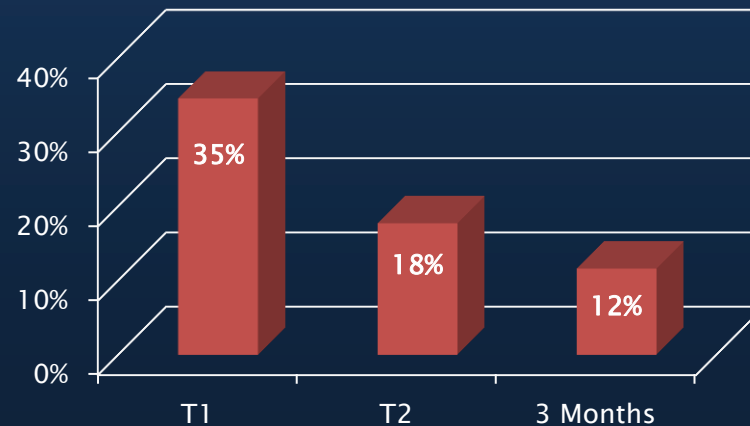
Average Drinks per Drinking Day



Average Drinks per Week



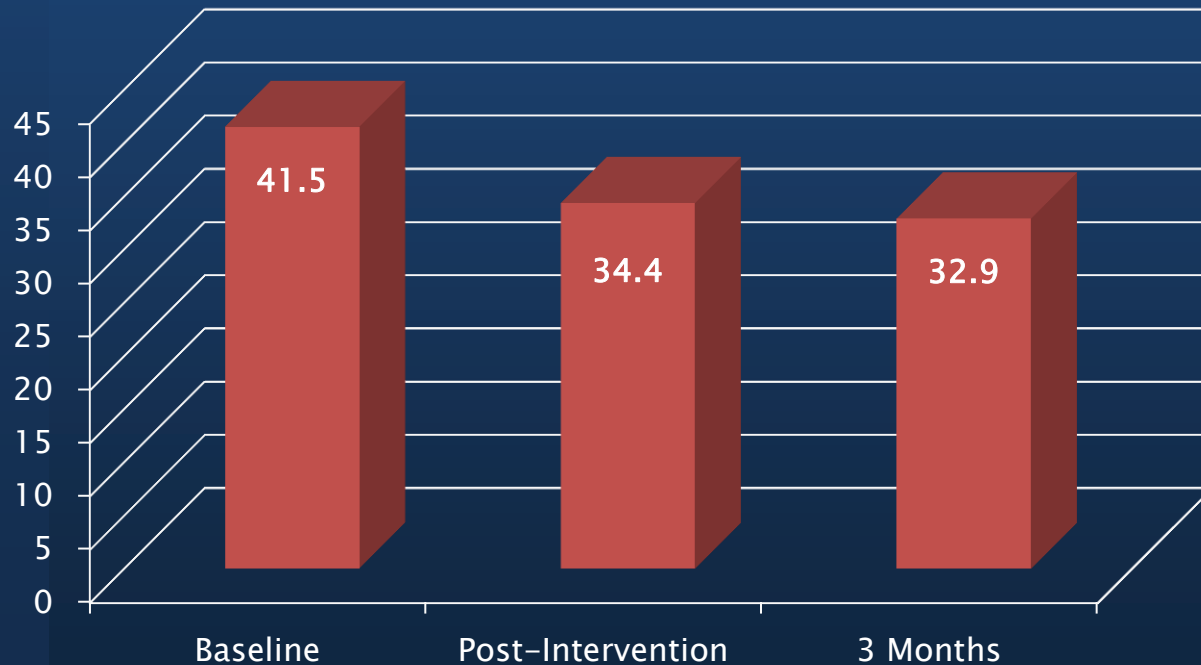
% Heavy Drinking Days



* P < .001

PSTD Symptom Changes (IIG)

PCL-5 Total Scores



* $P < .001$

DIG Findings

- Replication of findings with IIG
- Pre– to post–intervention
 - DDD, AWD
 - PTSD Symptoms
- Post–Intervention to 3 months
 - DDD, AWD, % HDD
 - PTSD Symptoms



Summary of Findings

- Reached large number of returning Veterans with problem drinking
- Significant changes in two important areas related to war zone exposure
- Gains maintained at 3 months
- Findings internally replicated (DIG)

Conclusions

- Important to develop new technologies to reach and intervene with returning Veterans who have post-deployment problems
- Returning Veterans will use Internet based interventions *on their own* to work on post-deployment recovery
- If empirically based self-management Web interventions are made available to all Veterans should help to reduce impact of war zone exposure

Questions (deborah.brief@va.gov)

